

# Anti-Bullying Policy

## St Joseph School (Senior Section) Sliema

### Rationale

#### **Respect for All**

Inspired by Gospel values and the teachings of St Emilie, our school aims to give our pupils a holistic education, developing their individual, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, creative and physical potential to the full.

An integral part of education at St Joseph's is that pupils are prepared to take their place in adult life. One essential aspect of this preparation for life is the development of mature Christian attitudes to themselves, to other people and towards the environment. Pupils are taught, encouraged and expected to develop sound Christian values, to be sensitive to the needs of others and to do all the good they can. Every pupil and staff member has a right to be treated with respect. This is also the basis for our Student Code of Behaviour, which relies on three basic elements:

- Self-respect
- Respect for Others
- Respect for the Environment

#### **Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools: Policy (Respect for All Framework MEDE 2014)**

#### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**

St Joseph School embraces the *Respect For All Framework (MEDE2014)* and its foundations on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which include the following rights (amongst others):

- The right to a safe and supportive educational environment free from violence and aggression both on an emotional and physical level.
- The right to be safeguarded from physical injuries and emotional distress, taking into account a person's self-worth, dignity and well-being.
- The right to healthy mental, physical, spiritual, moral, sexual and social development.
- The right to be treated equally, free from discriminatory comments, labelling and stereotyping.
- The right to adequate access to recreation and play.
- The right to freedom of expression and involvement.
- The right to privacy.

To this end the School will strive to create an environment where every pupil will feel safe, happy, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Bullying behaviour undermines all these well-being indicators and the value and quality of education.

St Joseph School is committed to dealing with bullying in a consistent and effective way. The School expects all adults and pupils to model their behaviour on respect for others, promoting a sense of personal worth and dignity. Everybody has a part to play in preventing bullying and reporting it; bystanders are not to condone this behaviour and are encouraged to speak to their parent, a member of staff or a trusted adult.

## **Definition of Bullying**

**Bullying is an abuse of power. It is a repeated, deliberate act of aggression that causes embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another. It takes many forms and may include physical attacks, verbal insults, extortion and theft, threatening and obscene gestures, spreading malicious rumours and deliberately excluding people from a group or activity.**

Bullying behaviour is *normally* characterised by:

- **Deliberate aggression:** where someone wilfully seeks to harm another
- **A perceived imbalance of power:** where those being harmed feel powerless
- **Action that leads to pain and distress:** pain that can be physical and/or emotional
- **Action that takes place over a period of time:** a single, isolated incident of aggression would not normally be described as bullying.

People can be bullied because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, learning ability, physical appearance and/or because they have a disability. There are endless reasons and sometimes no apparent reason, why people are bullied.

Bullying can occur whenever groups of people come together. No organisation can ever prevent bullying from happening and no school can ever guarantee that it is, or will become 'bully free'.

[Adapted from: Anti-Bullying Policy: Procedures and Guidance, Scottish Borders Council (2005)]

However there is no single type of behaviour that defines bullying. It comes in many different forms. Bullying behaviour results in pain and distress to the person at the receiving end. It is behaviour that leaves people feeling helpless, frightened, anxious, depressed, demeaned. Actions can affect people in different ways and this should be taken into consideration.

It should be recognised that even a single incident can have serious consequences when talking about bullying behaviour. It is never helpful to label children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels can stick for life and can isolate someone, rather than helping them to recover or change their behaviour.

## **Types of Bullying Behaviour**

Bullying can be divided into a number of categories.

**Direct Bullying** happens when there is fact-to-face interaction with the target. It can be divided into two categories:

*Physical Bullying* includes any physical act, which results in injuring or hurting the target. Examples include hitting, kicking and punching. Taking something that belongs to someone else and destroying it is also considered to be a type of physical bullying.

*Verbal Bullying* is the most common form of bullying and includes name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation and racist remarks.

*Non-Verbal Bullying* is derogatory body language and facial expressions.

**Indirect Bullying** takes place through gossip and spreading of rumours. It is a more subtle type of bullying and hence it is often harder to identify. This type of bullying is carried out behind the target's back but in the presence of others. It is designed to harm the target's social reputation and/or cause humiliation through isolating/ostracizing, spreading lies and rumours about the target, making humiliating facial or physical gestures and menacing looks, playing nasty jokes meant to embarrass and humiliate, hurtful mimicking and teasing, and encouraging others to ignore or socially exclude the target child.

**Cyberbullying** is harassment through the use of technology and/or online media. Cyberbullying can be either overt or covert. Although most cyberbullying incidents occur within the home environment, however, the repercussions of these acts often spill over into the school context. Examples of cyberbullying include using electronic means to intimidate, harm, exclude or ruin the reputation of the target child through the use of emails and instant messaging, texting, or digital imaging sent on cell phones, web pages and weblogs.

**Prejudice-based Bullying** can be physical or verbal. It is also a form of discrimination, harassment and victimisation of children and young people who are perceived to be different based on their race and ethnicity, gender, faith and religion, disability, body image issues, sexual orientation or socio-economic factors .

**Vulnerable students**, such as students with SEBD and/or learning difficulties are often the target of bullying behaviour. In particular there can be a greater vulnerability for students who do not understand social cues and have difficulty communicating. Some students with complex needs do not understand the concept of friendship and boundaries, whilst others do not know how to make judgements about what is safe information to share. Due to difficulties with their social skills, these students are often rejected by their peers, and are also often teased and ridiculed.

**Other reasons for bullying** may include physical attributes such as hair colour or weight, and jealousy. Intelligent and gifted children are quite often picked on as well. It is also important to remember that children and young people can be bullied for no apparent reason.

[Adapted from: Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools: Policy (Respect for All Framework), MEDE, (2014)]

## **Aims of our Anti-Bullying Policy**

This policy aims to:

- a) **PREVENT, REDUCE and RESPOND effectively to bullying situations;**
- b) Tackle incidents of bullying systematically, consistently and efficiently;
- c) Encourage 'speaking out' by those who are affected by bullying behaviour;
- d) Educate everyone that bullying is not tolerated at School;
- e) Educate everyone that standing up to bullying is our collective responsibility;
- f) Promote and reinforce the Christian ethos of care and respect for the individual;
- g) Rebuild relationships;
- h) Develop appropriate social skills and attitudes in the people on the receiving end of the bullying and the people involved in the bullying behaviour.

This will be achieved by:

- a) Sharing our Anti-Bullying Policy with the whole school community;
- b) Having shared expectations about how we treat and respect each other;
- c) Recognising the need to have the cooperation of all staff, pupils and parents in preventing bullying;
- d) Having a commitment to anti-bullying education;
- e) Listening to and acting upon reports of bullying;
- f) Resolving incidents of bullying by educating those involved;
- g) Educating pupils in the consequences of bullying behaviour.

## **Expectations**

St Joseph School expects staff, pupils and parents to work together to promote positive relationships and to support an environment where everyone feels valued and respected, as befitting the Christian ethos of the School.

## **Prevention Strategies**

- Staff and pupils model Christian values in their daily teaching and learning.
- Active and effective pastoral care system.
- Code of Behaviour and clear instructions on acceptable or unacceptable behaviour.
- Mistress of Discipline.

- Challenging unacceptable behaviour and language.
- Awareness-raising posters and assemblies.
- Guest Speakers and State Agencies are regularly invited to address pupils and undertake workshops.
- PSCE Curriculum.
- Staff In-Service Training.

## **Reporting**

In the first instance, pupils who are experiencing bullying behaviour are encouraged to speak to their parents/carers, their Class Teacher or an adult within the school. School staff who witness a bullying incident are to immediately verbally intervene to stop the bullying behaviour. When an incidence of bullying behaviour is reported it will be taken seriously and acted upon promptly.

The procedures below explain how the School will tackle the incident:

- a) The information received by the Class Teacher or adult will be shared with the Guidance Teacher/s. The Guidance Teacher/s will then investigate the incident appropriately using their professional judgement in the handling of the matter and will categorise the incident as '*Conflict*' or '*Bullying*'.
- b) '*Conflict*' incidents are taken note of by the Guidance Teacher/s who then schedule appointments to help the pupils involved resolve their differences.
- c) '*Bullying*' incidents are shared with the Mistress of Discipline, who is the Anti-Bullying designate member of staff.
- d) The Mistress of Discipline will investigate the matter further and take note on the Incident Report Book. The pupil voice will be taken into account at all times. Simultaneously, the Guidance Teacher/s will provide support and guidance to the pupils concerned.
- e) The Incident Report Book is accessed by Senior Management, the Mistress of Discipline and the Guidance Teacher/s only.
- f) The Mistress of Discipline and Guidance Teacher/s will monitor the frequency of incidents and any patterns of locations and individuals concerned, and propose arrangements that can help in the reduction of opportunities and reasons for bullying. Teachers will be made aware of the group dynamics so that classroom management can be planned accordingly.
- g) Senior Management will be updated and will decide the appropriate action to be taken in consultation with the Mistress of Discipline. Restorative practices will be used if deemed appropriate and parents will be informed of progress.
- h) The Guidance Teachers will be responsible for reporting and following the well-being of all those involved in a bullying incident. In cases where severe bullying is involved, the perpetrator and victim need therapeutic follow up from the School Counsellor.

The Class Teacher, Youth Worker or Anti-Bullying Service maybe be contacted when the need arises.

- i) Appropriate strategies/resources will be used in an attempt to change the behaviour of the person displaying bullying behaviour. The person at the receiving end of bullying behaviour will be given support through appropriate use of strategies/resources.
- j) In serious cases parents/carers will be informed and they may be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem. Parents/carers will be given advice/support to encourage the positive behaviour of their children – meetings, information leaflets, advice.
- k) Where appropriate the Head of School will become involved if sanctions include formal parental meeting, formal Behaviour Contract or Suspension, or any other sanction, commensurate with their actions.
- l) If necessary and appropriate, police will be contacted.
- m) Any instance of continued bullying or intimidation after an investigation and warning will result in further sanctions.
- n) The Head of School reserves the right to ask a pupil who is responsible for serious bullying, even in first cases, to leave the school.
- o) If a member of staff feels that they are on the receiving end of bullying behaviour, it should be reported to a person the staff member feels is the most appropriate – Senior Management Team member, Head of School or union.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Responsibilities of all Staff**

Everyone is responsible to intervene, stop and report bullying behaviour. Additionally, everyone should respond in an open and respectful way to pupils who raise concerns.

### **Responsibilities of Pastoral Staff**

All reports of bullying behaviour will be taken seriously and investigated using the procedures outlined in this policy document.

### **Responsibilities of Pupils**

Bullying is never acceptable and it is not tolerated at St Joseph School. If you are involved in bullying behaviour you can expect to be taken seriously. If you are on the receiving end of the bullying you must immediately inform an adult who can help you – your parents, your Class Teacher, your Key LSA, the Guidance Teacher, the Assistant Head. Do not think that reporting the bullying will make things worse. A report of bullying will be dealt with carefully. You have a right to feel safe and happy in school, and to be treated with respect – don't let anyone else take away these rights. Reach out and ask for help.

Pupils should:

- tell someone who can do something about it
- report any incidents of bullying behaviour that they witness
- behave in a responsible and respectful way when using technology to communicate
- be aware that on-line bullying can be regarded as criminal activity and that the police can get involved
- work with the school to help resolve bullying incidents
- make sure their own behaviour does not make others worried or upset.

### **Responsibilities of Parents**

Parents should:

- take their daughter's concerns seriously
- report concerns or suspicions of bullying to the Class Teacher or Guidance Teacher or Assistant Head
- appreciate that the whole story may be very complex with blurred memories, circumstances and perceptions of what happened
- endeavour to work together with the school to resolve any issues and to allow an agreed period of time for the school to implement strategies for resolution
- should cooperate with any consequences (including sanctions) which are decided by the School.

### **Conclusion**

Bullying is never acceptable. It is not a normal part of growing up. It does not build character. Trust, acceptance, consistency and safety build character.

#### SOURCES

Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools: Policy, Respect for All Framework, MEDE, (2014)

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Respect Me: A National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People, The Scottish Government, (2010)

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